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Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee's public hearing on S.B. No. 1011-An Act Concerning a Reorganization of Connecticut's System of Public Higher Education

Senator Bye, Representative Willis, and members of the Committee, Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify today.

I am, Judit Paolini, an advocate for SCSU for I am one of its many success stories. I am proud to serve as a member of the Alumni Association Board of Directors. Yes, to give back to the university which opened its doors to me is truly an honor. As a venue for public higher education it has evolved from a four year college to a magnificent university. Private institutions are inaccessible for far too many. Southern is a beacon of hope and provides quality education for its students including students like myself who are bilingual and come from poverty. I ask this legislative body to reconsider and rethink its plan to Reorganize Connecticut's System of Public Higher Education.

I am a Hungarian refugee. My family escaped Hungary in 1956. At the time Hungary was one of the Iron Curtin countries in Europe. Life there was oppressive and our most basic needs were not met. There were times when we simply didn't even have enough food to eat. I vividly recall one such occasion. Dinner was of one loaf of bread for our family of seven.

We arrived in Connecticut in 1957. I first attended Southern in 1969. However, I almost didn't make it for I did not have the \$50 tuition fee in time for the deadline. I called SOUTHERN and desperately exclaimed that I needed an extension to pay my tuition. And it was my only option to go to college. Luckily, it was granted.

Higher education enables one to become a role model and create a better community. I humbly think of myself as an example. Upon graduation I taught English and reading in the West Haven School system for 32 years. Throughout my profession I encouraged my students to strive going to college. When students cried that learning English was hard I exclaimed that I didn't even speak English when I was a young child! I worked twice as hard as some of my classmate; but I didn't give up. They could do it too. I informed them that Southern was in New Haven very close by. It's a public university which they could afford. They would have to work diligently, but they could do it.

Over the years it has expanded from a four year college to a superb university. It continues to expand in order to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Funds are needed for construction of new projects and completion for ones already underway such as the renovation of the Buley Library. New projects include the renovation of the old student center and demolition of Seabury Hall. Once this work is finished it will house the School of Business. Such projects must not be in peril due to lack of funding. Renovations are costly, but the fruit of such labor allows Southern to continue being a strong competitor providing training and leadership for its students. Its graduates will enable our State and community to bring its goals to fruition.

Southern's voice must be heard; I urge this legislative body to listen to the concerns advocates express on behalf of the university. Southern's success enables our State and community to flourish.